

A Brand is Forever

August 2003

Lesson "A brand is a cow's only return address."
(Morris, 1993)

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Grades: Middle School

Duration: 1 - 5 days

Introduction: "For at least 4,000 years man has marked cattle with red-hot branding irons to prove his ownership. Literally millions of designs have been originated - some romantic, some dignified, some even comical - to distinguish herds. And there have been the robbers of the ranges, the despicable cattle rustlers, gifted at altering brands and claiming the cattle as their own. Some of the rawest stories to come out of the West deal with the crime of cattle rustling, when men often "Shot out" justice. There is a true story behind every brand, frequently a tragedy, a comedy, a tender romance, more often a proclamation of hope."
(From Irons in the Fire - Cattle Brand Lore by Oren Arnold)

Topic: Cattle Branding

Subjects: Social Studies and Language Arts

Goal: Teach students about branding cattle on the Grant-Kohrs Ranch.

Objectives: The student will:

- learn the history of branding
- read, understand and identify various brands
- create their own cattle brand
- listen to stories and songs from the "Cowboy Era"

National Standards:

Thematic Standards

I. Culture and Cultural Diversity

II. Time, Continuity and Change

IV. Individual, Development and Identity

V. Individuals, Groups, and Institutions

VIII. Science, Technology, and Society

Montana Standards:

Social Studies Content Standard 1: Students access, synthesize, and evaluate information to communicate and apply social studies knowledge to real world situations.

Social Studies Content Standard 4: Students demonstrate an understanding of the effects of time, continuity, and change on historical and future perspectives and relationships.

Museum objects: Official Brand Certificates
Photos of branding, branding books, branding stove
Branding Irons
Film Footage of Cattle and Branding

Other Materials: Bag(s) of small plastic farm animals
Brand That Critter handout
Pipe cleaner OR hangars OR paperclips
Tempera paint
Cow handout
Bingo handout
Branding Symbol handouts

Books: The Cowboy's Own Brand Book by Duncan Emrich
The Log of a Cowboy: A Narrative of the Old Trail Days by Andy Adams
Irons in the Fire - Cattle Brand Lore by Oren Arnold

CDs:

Yodel the Cowboy Way with Riders in the Sky
1998 Rounder Records Corp. One Camp Street, Cambridge, Massachusetts 02140
Cattle Call: Early Cowboy Music and its Roots
1996 Rounder Records Corp., One Camp Street, Cambridge, Massachusetts 02140

VHS Movies:

"The Cowboy" starring John Wayne
Warner Bros. Westerns, A Mark Rydell Film

"The Scarlet Brand" 1932 starring Bob Custer
director: JP McGowan

"Vengeance of Rannah" 1936 starring Bob Custer

Procedures:

1) Anticipatory Set(s)

·Teacher opens lesson with a review of open range philosophy (no fences). Divide class into 4 or 5 groups. (dependent on number of bags of plastic cows). Hand out plastic farm cows to groups of students. Have students count, manipulate and divide cattle into groups. Then have the students place the cattle back into the bag. Play "That's My Cow".

Ask students to:

Select their cattle from the bag. How can they identify their cattle from the others in the group?
How might cowboys identify cattle from their operation? What problems or concerns surface?

·Music from CD's

Yodel the Cowboy Way with Riders In The Sky
Cattle Call: Early Cowboy Music and its Roots

2) Present history of brands through lecture OR
"Jigsaw"

A. Nobody knows just when or where branding originated. The University of Chicago has done research that proves that branding was done 2,000 years before Christ. Tombs in Egypt show ancient brands along with the actual work of branding. The only difference is that the costume of the "cowboy" is quite different. Mostly the name or sign of some god seems to have been chosen for the brand, but there were temple symbols used as brands and one ox pictured has a number 43 on its rump.

Elsewhere it can be found that early Egyptians, Romans, Greeks, and others fire-branded criminals and slaves. During the same time periods, there is evidence that branding livestock was a common practice. There is biblical evidence that Jacob branded his livestock. Chinese ideographs have been branded on animals so long that probably even Confucius could not have said when the practice started. The crossed hammers of Solingen was burned on animals and stamped on swords in the Middle Ages.

Hernando Cortez brought the first branding irons to the new World. He didn't need to because there were no cattle or horses on this continent to mingle with his for quite a while. In 1540, Coronado came to what is now Arizona with branded cattle. Later, the Yankee showed his face and due to practical necessity brands were called for and used.

The history of branding on the Grant-Kohrs Ranch in the Deer Lodge Valley of what is now Montana, began in the 1860's with Johnny Grant. Grant used a lower case " " to brand his cattle. Today it might be considered a C, hanging J, as lower case letters are not used in branding. "The g was probably the first brand used in the Deer Lodge Valley - though by no means the first one in Montana - whatever claims Grant may have to running the first "real" ranch in the Territory. The Mission Cross was used in Montana in the 1830's, and was probably the first in the Territory." (Meikle, 1983)

Conrad Kohrs used a number of different brands, including CK, Y, and K. Today, the Grant-Kohrs Ranch uses the G brand, known as the lazy G, hanging K.

"The peculiar circumstances in his nation, however, foreordained the biggest and altogether greatest cattle enterprise in the history of the world, created a new man - the cowboy - and lifted branding from a mere tagging to a boast of heraldry." (Arnold, p.29)

3) Teach students how to read and create brands.

- a. Show brand pictures & demonstrate on board
- b. Vocabulary handout
- c. The Cowboy's Own Brand Book
- d. Websites: cowboyshowcase.com/brands.htm
barbwiremuseum.com/cattlebrandhistory.htm

4) Practice Sheet

5) Students will create their own brands

6) Teacher begins lesson by reading Chapter VII "The Colorado" from: The Log of a Cowboy: A narrative of the Old Trail Days by Andy Adams

7) Present information on Rustlers

Rustlers, of course, had no brands of their own to start with. They simply changed other brands until they were unrecognizable, and called them their own. They would use a running iron and build on to already existing brands.

If a rustler lived near two ranches, and one of the ranches had a Chair brand, and the second had an Eleven brand, he could change these brands into a Rocking Chair brand with few lines. Following is an example of how the change was actually done.

Chair Rocking Chair Eleven Rocking Chair
(Emrich, 1954)

- 8) Students will exchange personal brand papers to:
 - a) identify and read partner's brand
 - b) attempt to alter the brand as a rustler
- 9) Form personal brands using pipe cleaners.
- 10) Using temptra paint, brand cattle
- 11) Closure:
Show a scene of a branding from classic cowboy video.

Suggested movies: "The Cowboy"

"The Scarlet Brand" 1932

"Vengeance of Rannah" 1936

Video Clip from Grant-Kohrs Ranch available in the spring of 2004

Measurable Results:

- Students will be able to identify the components of the history of branding.
- Students will share and explain their brands.

Extension and Enrichment Activities:

Research:

Branding cattle or livestock; today vs. yesterday

Blacksmiths: 3 types; tools

Number of brands in your state

Cost of branding today vs. yesterday

Stories behind the brand

Family brands

Procedures used on cattle at the Roundup

Invite a Brand Inspector in to discuss aspects of the job

Invite a ranching family to come into the classroom to share branding stories and expertise.

Explore Brand Certificates - Grant-Kohrs Ranch

Play Brand Bingo - blank included, students write in brands as directed

Take a virtual tour of a branding

Write a short story about the history of brands

Write a short story explaining the reasons behind their brand.

Attend a branding

Create a Venn Diagram comparing Roundups of the past to today.

Bibliography

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